

Message Text

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FOR SECRETARY OF STATE AND DIRECTOR ACTION/PEACE CORPS;
DEPARTMENT ALSO PASS AID

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: OGEN
SUBJ: PEACE CORPS-STATE DEPARTMENT RELATIONS

REF: STATE 088322

1. I VERY MUCH WELCOME THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES GUIDING
STATE-PEACE CORPS RELATIONS AND I AM IN FULL AGREEMENT WITH THE
GENERAL THRUST. IN THE CAE THE PEACE CORPS HAS FULFILLED ITS ROLE
ADMIRABLY AND HAS SUCCESSFULLY BUILT NON-POLITICAL LINKS AT THE
GRASS ROOTS LEVEL AND THEREBY SIGNIFICANTLY ADVANCED OUR HUMAN-
ITARIAN GOALS. PEACE CORPS HERE HAS OPERATED WITH CONSIDERABLE
AUTONOMY, CERTAINLY IN TERMS OF PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMEN-
TATION.

2. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, TWO PROBLEMS WITH THE GUIDELINES FROM THE
BANGUI POINT OF VIEW. THESE RELATE TO THE GOCAE'S PERCEPTION OF
THE PEACE CORPS AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AID AND PEACE CORPS.
THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT BOKASSA SEES THE PEACE CORPS AS
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SOMETHING MORE THAN A PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PROGRAM INDEPENDENT OF US
FOREIGN POLICY. THE FACT THAT THE EMBASSY IS IMMEDIATELY INVOLVED
WHEN THERE ARE UNUSUAL AND URGENT PC-GOCAE PROBLEMS, AS IN THE
MAHER CASE LAST SUMMER, REINFORCES THIS PERCEPTION. VOLUNTEERS,
IN PARTICULAR TEACHERS, DO SIMILAR WORK TO THAT OF FRENCH OR
RUSSIAN AID PERSONNEL. THE GOCAE DEALS WITH THE PEACE CORPS AS AN
AID AGENCY PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, THE VERY DIFFERENT

LIFE STYLE OF THE PCV'S NOTWITHSTANDING. IN ADDITION, WITH THE SUSPENSION OF OUR BILATERAL AID, PEACE CORPS HAS BECOME FAR AND AWAY THE MOST VISIBLE ELEMENT OF THE US PRESENCE AND ITS CONTINUED GROWTH IS UNDOUBTEDLY PERCEIVED BY BOKASSA AS AN EARNEST OF OUR DESIRE TO SUSTAIN A POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS GOVERN-

MENT. IT SHOULD BE SAID THAT THIS PERCEPTION DOES NOT VITIATE THE VOLUNTEERS' ABILITY TO GO ABOUT THEIR WORK. IN THEIR WORKING MILIEU THEY ARE NOT THOUGHT OF AS AGENTS OF US FOREIGN POLICY. NONETHELESS, THE OVERALL SIZE OF THE PROGRAM DOES HAVE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. THE PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR AND I HAVE TRIED TO KEEP THE PC PROGRAM AS APOLITICAL AS POSSIBLE DURING THE LAST YEAR WHEN OUR RELATIONS WITH THE CAE HAVE TAKEN A TURN FOR THE WORSE. THE PEACE CORPS, HOWEVER, IS ONLY FIVE YEARS OLD HERE. WE WOULD HOPE THAT OVER TIME THE HOCAE WILL COME INCREASINGLY TO PERCEIVE THE GENUINE POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM.

3. THE SECOND ISSUE MAY HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTRIES OTHER THAN THE CAE. IN THE CAE PCV'S WORK IN FOUR AID PROJECTS. AID RESOURCES, INCLUDING VEHICLES, HAVE BEEN PUT AT THEIR DISPOSAL AND IN SOME CASE VOLUNTEERS HAVE BEEN THE IMPLEMENTING AGENTS OF AID PROJECTS. AID IS OBVIOUSLY A MORE POLITICAL INSTITUTION THAN ACTION AND OUR DECISION TO SUSPEND NEW AID PROJECTS LAST SEPTEMBER BECAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS WAS AN OVERTLY POLITICAL DECISION. IT HAD THE EFFECT OF ELIMINATING A NUMBER OF NEW PROJECTS IN FISHERIES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN WHICH VOLUNTEERS WOULD HAVE PARTICIPATED. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PEACE CORPS WAS THUS DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY A USG POLITICAL DECISION. AS A RESULT IT IS NOW SEEKING OTHER INDEPENDENT SOURCES OF FUNDING TO REPLACE THOSE AFFECTED BY USAID'S EARLIER DECISIONS.

4. IF POLITICIZATION OF THE PEACE CORPS ROLE IS TO BE AVOIDED IN THE FUTURE, SOME CHANGE IN PROCEDURES IS NECESSARY. I AM CONVINCED THAT AID RESOURCES CAN PROVIDE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF SUPPORT TO PEACE CORPS AND THAT VOLUNTEERS CAN BE OF INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE TO AID TECHNICIANS (AS IS THE CASE IN THE USAID HEALTH PROJECT IN THE OUHAM PREFECTURE). HOWEVER, IT IS NOT REASONABLE FOR PEACE CORPS TO EXPAND ITS COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP, WHEREBY WE MIGHT SIGNIFICANTLY ADVANCE OUR HUMANITARIAN INTERESTS IN THE THIRD WORLD, (AS SUGGESTED IN STATE 094373) UNLESS SOME WAY CAN BE FOUND TO ENSURE THAT ONGOING AID PROJECTS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO THE VAGARIES OF OUR POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH A PARTICULAR COUNTRY. PEACE CORPS SHOULD HAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT WHERE RESOURCES ARE PROVIDED BY AID THEY WILL BE MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT THE LIFE OF THE PROJECT. ANOTHER, AND NOT NECESSARILY CONTRADICTORY, APPROACH WOULD BE FOR PEACE CORPS TO HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER VOLUNTEER SUPPORT FUNDS IN ITS OWN BUDGET. TWO TO THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS PER VOLUNTEER WOULD GO A LONG WAY TO GIVE THE PEACE CORPS THE KIND OF RESOURCE INDEPENDENCE WHICH IT

NEEDS TO CARRY OUT ITS MANDATE EFFECTIVELY.

5. A WORLD ABOUT THE FINAL PARAGRAPH OF THE GUIDANCE MESSAGE. GUIDELINES ARE BADLY NEEDED ON THE EXTENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT THE EMBASSY SHOULD PROVIDE PEACE CORPS. COMMUNICATIONS ARE AN OBVIOUS MINIMUM. BUT IN THE AREAS OF BUDGET AND FISCAL AND GENERAL SERVICES THERE IS NO CLEAR-CUT POLICY. THESE ISSUES CAN AND USUALLY ARE RESOLVED LOCALLY, BUT CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION WOULD BE ELIMINATED IF THERE WERE A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING ON THE RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PC AND EMBASSY ADMINISTRATIVE SECTIONS. THE AUTONOMY OF THE PEACE CORPS IS ERODED TO THE EXTENT THAT THE EMBASSY TAKES ON ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FOR THE PEACE CORPS, WHICH PEACE CORPS COULD DO ITSELF.

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